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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman:

Mrs. ESPINOSA

(Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 101: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)
(A/C.3/51/L.5, L.6 and L.8)

AGENDA ITEM 102: INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 158: QUESTION OF THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (continued) (A/C.3/51/L.10)

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.8

1. Mr. BUSALLA (Italy), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, particularly its technical cooperation capacity" on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Argentina, Armenia, Georgia and Tunisia, drew the Committee's and the Secretariat's attention to the fact that, in the title of the English text, the word "crime" had inadvertently been omitted.
2. Questions related to crime prevention had become increasingly important to many States. For international cooperation in that field, the United Nations offered a universal forum where States from all over the world were part of an information network that allowed them to share experiences and, therefore, to strengthen their crime prevention institutions. That was why the United Nations structures in that field must be solid.
3. In 1995, the General Assembly had decided to upgrade the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch to division level. That decision had emphasized the primary importance that the General Assembly attached to international cooperation in the field of crime prevention. Unfortunately, since the United Nations was going through a financial crisis, the new posts assigned to the Division had been frozen. That had hampered the Division's ability to respond to the growing number of requests for assistance and to the numerous mandates assigned by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. That was why the draft resolution requested the Secretary-General to ensure full implementation of that measure and to further strengthen the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme by providing it with the resources needed for full implementation of its mandates. The other paragraphs of the draft resolution closely followed the previous year's text.
4. At the request of some delegations, and after having informed the sponsors of the draft resolution, his delegation wished to revise the draft resolution. The second preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 50/146, which had originally been omitted in order to shorten the draft resolution, would now be inserted as a new third preambular paragraph, which would read as follows:

"Convinced of the desirability of closer coordination and cooperation among States in combating crime, including drug-related crimes, such as terrorist crimes, illicit arms trade and money-laundering, and bearing in mind the role that could be played by both the United Nations and regional organizations in this respect,".

The sponsors of the draft resolution hoped that it could be adopted by consensus, as in previous years.

5. Mr. FERNÁNDEZ (Spain), Mr. TARRASENKO (Russian Federation), Mr. WISSA (Egypt), Ms. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) and Mr. CARRANZA (Guatemala) joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.5

6. Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon), introducing an amendment to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.3/51/L.3 entitled "United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security", said that he was not trying to reopen the debate on the contents of the Declaration but would like to add the following paragraph to the annex of the draft resolution as the first preambular paragraph, after the words "The General Assembly,":

"Recalling the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations,".

7. The Declaration had been unanimously adopted at the end of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, in which all States had participated at the highest level. It was a very explicit Declaration which reflected the concerns of all States and provided a framework for activities relating to public security. The elimination of all forms of crime required dissuasive and preventive measures; the international community should deal with the underlying causes of crime as vigorously as it dealt with the effects and take preventive measures such as measures to promote socio-economic development. His delegation hoped that the amendment would be supported by all delegations.

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.9

8. Mr. TOLLE (Mexico), introducing the draft resolution entitled "International action to combat drug abuse and illicit production and trafficking" on behalf of the sponsors, said that the latter had been joined by Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Namibia. The fact that the draft resolution was being sponsored by a large number of countries from all the geographical regions reflected the international community's commitment to further strengthening efforts aimed at combating that scourge.

9. The present comprehensive draft resolution was the outcome of substantial negotiations and consultations and constituted a contribution to efforts to streamline and enhance the efficiency of the General Assembly's action. The comprehensive treatment given in the draft resolution to that very complex and multifaceted problem had undoubtedly given a sharper focus to the Organization's efforts in that field. It was also a clear example of the spirit of cooperation existing in efforts to combat the drug problem.

10. After reviewing the contents of the draft resolution, he noted that the text was the outcome of broad and intensive negotiations during which all participants had demonstrated good faith and a constructive attitude. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

11. Ms. TOLLE (Kenya) and Mr. CHOMAR (Mozambique) joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/51/L.10

12. Ms. WRONEC (Poland), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Question of the elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime" on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Austria, Belarus, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea, said that the draft resolution was the result of intensive informal consultations. After consulting the Office of Legal Affairs, and bearing in mind the views of participants, it had been decided to revise paragraphs 1 and 2 by replacing the words "Member States" with the words "all States". She hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/38, A/51/90, A/51/180, A/51/210, A/51/277 and Corr.1, A/51/304 and Corr.1, A/51/309, A/51/325, A/51/391 and A/50/509 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 104: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (continued) (A/51/90, A/51/210 and A/51/322)

13. Mr. HADJIYSKI (Bulgaria) said that Bulgaria's views had been expressed in the statement made on behalf of the European Union on agenda items 103 and 104, whose conclusions and proposals it shared and supported.

14. At the national level, Bulgaria had taken a number of initiatives to implement the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Council of Ministers had adopted a National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women and a package of measures for its implementation. The Plan had been drafted by an inter-agency commission with the participation of numerous non-governmental organizations. It was aimed, inter alia, at promoting and protecting women's human rights; improving women's socio-economic status by guaranteeing their equal participation in labour and employment; alleviating and eliminating poverty among women; promoting the participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in all spheres of public and political life; improving women's health; and eliminating all forms of violence against women. The National Plan consisted of four main sections:

(a) tasks and activities of the Government for the achievement of the strategic goals;

(b) projects relating to women that were being implemented in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and international organizations;

(c) institutions and mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the National Plan; and

(d) resources for carrying out the measures adopted.

15. The package of measures adopted by the Council of Ministers was aimed at ensuring the achievement of the strategic goals and objectives set forth in the National Plan and, in particular, their proper funding. It should be noted that, in view of the budgetary austerity and the restrictive monetary and fiscal environment accompanying the structural adjustment of Bulgaria's economy,

effective attainment of the goals of the National Plan of Action would require the extensive cooperation of international organizations and institutions and also financial contributions.

16. Bulgaria reiterated its support for the activities of the United Nations aimed at achieving equality between women and men. In that connection, the Commission on the Status of Women deserved special mention. Bulgaria remained firmly committed to the implementation of the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the attainment of its strategic goals.

17. Ms. TOLLE (Kenya) said that her Government was committed to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with a view to ensuring the full participation of women in all spheres of society, including the decision-making process and access to positions of power, in order to contribute to equality, development and peace in the world. The effective implementation of the Platform for Action required a commitment by Governments and international organizations and institutions to mobilize additional resources, and the formulation and implementation, at the national level, of specific measures to guarantee equality between men and women. The United Nations system had an important role to play in assisting Member States, including Kenya, in eradicating poverty among women, who constituted more than half the world's population.

18. Kenya commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for amending its reporting guidelines (A/51/277) in order to ensure that reports included information on measures taken to implement the Platform for Action. It invited all Member States to support that very timely decision.

19. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304), she welcomed the measures being taken to realize the targets set by the General Assembly. Although the goal for the representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had been achieved, progress at decision-making levels was slow and insufficient. In order to achieve full equality (50-50 gender distribution), time limits must be established. Kenya urged the Secretary-General to appoint qualified African women to senior posts in the Secretariat in conformity with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. In order for the United Nations Development Fund for Women to continue its efforts to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in developing countries, particularly in Africa, and to integrate the needs of women in programmes at all levels, its operational activities must be strengthened by increasing financial support from Governments, multilateral financial institutions, private donors and non-governmental organizations. The Fund should also submit a report directly to the Third Committee.

20. As a follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in order to promote gender equality and improve the status of women in its development process, Kenya had strengthened its national coordinating committee in collaboration with the national focal points in various ministries and institutions in order to fulfil its national obligations under the Platform for Action. It had also integrated the gender perspective in sustainable development policies and programmes; strengthened the mechanisms for assessing

the impact of development policies on women; appointed women to senior government posts, such as high court judges; launched community programmes for mainstreaming women's activities consistent with national objectives; established income-generating development programmes designed to upgrade the standard of living of rural and urban women, which had enabled groups of women to purchase land, build houses and business premises and initiate viable projects in the areas of health, water, industry and housing; and promoted and improved the quality of education for girls.

21. Kenya had also enacted laws enabling men and women to buy and inherit land and property on an equal footing and was making every effort to promote voter education programmes for women with a view to increasing their participation in Parliament and local administration. The Government continued to encourage the more than 100 non-governmental organizations to deal with women's issues as part of their development agendas with a view to upgrading women's standard of living in the rural areas. Kenya would continue to make every effort to ensure that women were integrated in development and had greater access to education, health and productive resources.

22. Ms. MESDOUA (Algeria) said that the measures contained in the platforms for action of the various decades for the advancement of women were intended to serve as guidelines for an ongoing process of adaptation to constantly changing national situations. In that connection, the Beijing Conference had provided an opportunity to assess the progress achieved and determine what measures should be taken in order to ensure that women entered the twenty-first century as full members of society. Although it behoved to Governments to lay the groundwork and find the resources for implementing programmes of action, it was also crucial for the United Nations, in addition to integrating women in its policies and programmes and providing equal opportunities in the Secretariat, to guarantee the implementation of the Platform for Action at the international level and the promotion of international cooperation for its implementation.

23. In the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly since its mandate had been strengthened, played a fundamental role in following up the implementation of the medium-term plan and the Platform for Action; it would also help the Economic and Social Council to coordinate progress reports prepared by other United Nations agencies. The Economic and Social Council should integrate the needs of women in the work of the technical commissions and ensure the system-wide coordination of the results obtained in meeting the targets for women set at all recent United Nations conferences.

24. United Nations bodies that worked specifically on the advancement of women should be able to discharge their responsibilities in an effective manner. Hence, the human and material resources provided for in the United Nations budget must be sufficient to enable the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and all other bodies working for the advancement of women to give real substance to the Platform for Action.

25. Algerian women, who participated actively and on the same footing as men in all efforts to realize their country's goals, played a pivotal role in the process of development, democratization and national renewal. Efforts to involve women in the establishment of modern society in Algeria had resulted in ever greater numbers of skilled women entering the labour market and taking on more senior positions. Moreover, efforts were being made to encourage women to exercise their right to freedom of association and expression, as guaranteed by the Constitution. Finally, evidence of Algeria's commitment to equal rights for women could be found in its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its support for the principle of elaborating an optional protocol to strengthen the mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention.

26. Ms. GORDON (Jamaica), associating herself with the statement made by the representative of the Bahamas on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, although concern had been expressed at the end of the Fourth World Conference on Women about the difficulty of implementing its outcomes, the Secretary-General's reports and the statements made in the Committee seemed to indicate that progress had been achieved in the area of follow-up - a little in some areas and much more in others. Nonetheless, all States recognized that much more needed to be done.

27. Jamaica would continue to support initiatives taken by the Economic and Social Council, its Commissions and related bodies and other United Nations agencies working for the advancement of women. As outlined in the CARICOM subregional plan of action, the priorities were poverty, education and training, violence against women and children (especially the girl-child) and inequality in power-sharing and decision-making at all levels.

28. Jamaica commended the work done by Governments and the United Nations to mainstream the gender perspective in follow-up programmes to the Conference, but was concerned about the tendency to use "gender" interchangeably with "women" when referring to matters relating solely to women. In that regard, the clarification of the term "gender" in document A/51/322 was much appreciated.

29. The issue of violence against women migrant workers needed further study, taking account of the factors outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/325). Given its own multi-ethnic population and the large number of Jamaicans in the immigrant populations of the United States, Canada and Europe, Jamaica understood both sides of the issue and could exercise tolerance and understand different views.

30. Governments and the United Nations system must provide adequate financial and human resources for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; in addition to providing the necessary personnel, they must help create an appropriate working environment. There were many parts of the world where women were exploited and the international community had a difficult task ahead if it was to put an end to the situation.

31. Ms. CHOWDHURY (India) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had offered a new perspective on women's issues, viewing them as an intrinsic part of and central to society as a whole, and had secured international consensus on

the advancement of women as a moral imperative. With regard to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, India commended the new working methods and the adoption of a multi-year programme of work by the Commission on the Status of Women. The United Nations system had responded seriously to the mandates of the Beijing Conference; however, India hoped to see greater gender sensitivity in the follow-up to the recent world conferences sponsored by the United Nations, integration of the gender perspective in analytical and operational activities and measures to increase the numbers of women in the Secretariat on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Furthermore, the Division for the Advancement of Women and other related organizations dealing with women in the United Nations system must be adequately funded.

32. The Indian Government had worked, with the help of non-governmental organizations, to fulfil the commitments it had made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, by drafting a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women. That policy incorporated the gender perspective into all plans, policies, programmes, budgetary allocations, appraisals, monitoring and evaluatory exercises, so as to guide action and policy in every sector. The aim was to facilitate the advancement of women and guarantee their participation in the development and decision-making process on equal terms, through strategies of education and affirmative action.

33. Women were also being empowered at the political level through a combination of affirmative action, such as the establishment of quotas in legislative and decision-making bodies, and through strategies of education, self-help, advocacy and awareness raising. There were now nearly one million women holding positions of power and participating in decision-making at all levels - a direct consequence of the amendment of the Constitution in 1992. The Government had also tabled a bill, that received cross-party support, to reserve at least one third of seats for women in the national parliament and State Legislative Assemblies.

34. With regard to the issue of violence and discrimination against women, the National Commission for Women, with the help of the judiciary and non-governmental organizations, had introduced "People's Courts". Those courts had resolved nearly 7,000 cases in less than a year. A recommendation had been made for the appointment of special Commissioners to publicly defend women's rights, and the Government, in consultation with the National Commission for Women, was currently undertaking a review of all existing laws in order to remove provisions which discriminated against women, and to propose additional legislation to safeguard women's rights. Moreover, in keeping with its Beijing commitments, India remained committed to increasing budgetary expenditure on education to 6 per cent of GDP by the year 2000. The focus of elementary education would be the girl child and special attention would be given to areas with a high incidence of female illiteracy.

35. The problems of women and poverty could not be divorced from the wider economic environment or the problem of poverty eradication. The most effective strategies for poverty eradication would be those that focused on the crucial but often less visible role of women in the economy. In order to succeed those

strategies must address structural imbalances and their wider causes. Yet, neither the negotiations within the Commission on the Status of Women concerning resolutions on women and poverty, nor those within the Commission for Social Development concerning poverty eradication, nor practical action at the international level, had demonstrated the solidarity, good faith, political will or acknowledgement of collective responsibility required to resolve the problem. Successful implementation of the Platform for Action depended on the contribution of all the participants - Governments, civil society and international organizations - and while the primary responsibility for implementation lay at the national level, international cooperation was crucial, particularly with regard to fulfilling commitments to provide financial resources.

36. Mr. MAGHERU (Romania), speaking in support of the statement made by the delegation of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, said that the Beijing Conference was very important to the future of all women, since it presented a programme for the advancement of women and the achievement of equality between the sexes. The Conference had also underscored the role of women as agents of change and their contribution to the promotion of democratic values and the prosperity of society: it had been instrumental in ensuring that women's rights were viewed as an integral part of human rights and universal fundamental freedoms. In keeping with that new vision, the gender perspective should be incorporated into all national, regional and international policies and programmes.

37. Although Governments bore the main responsibility for implementing that and other recommendations in the Beijing Platform for Action, civil society and the international community had also to do their part. In that regard, Romania was pleased to note that the United Nations system was working to integrate issues relating to equality between men and women into its activities, and hoped that the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Women's Group, established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, would help to achieve cohesion in the follow-up activities to the world conferences, and seek to reconcile the political and operational aspects of United Nations activities so that the gender perspective would be an integral part of the entire system.

38. To fulfil a commitment made at the Beijing Conference, his Government, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Economic Commission for Europe, had organized a subregional conference of government experts on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in central and eastern Europe, which had been held in Bucharest from 12 to 14 September 1996. In accordance with the priorities of the Platform for Action and the specific needs of the countries with economies in transition, the Conference had considered three important topics: the elaboration of national strategies and plans of action for implementing the Beijing Programme, including the mobilization of resources and international cooperation; the identification of measures and mechanisms to encourage the institutional capacity of the relevant national structures; and the role of civil society in implementing the recommendations of the Conference. The Bucharest meeting had brought home the fact that the complex women's issues could not be tackled in a constructive and efficient manner unless joint efforts were made at the governmental, non-

governmental and international levels. The meeting had provided an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of opinions, helped to clarify the measures which the new democracies needed to take to promote the advancement of women, and emphasized the need to integrate the gender perspective into those countries' democratic processes.

39. The final document of the Bucharest meeting contained specific recommendations on organizing national consultative processes involving civil society with a view to elaborating and implementing national plans, integrating activities designed to strengthen national structures working for the advancement of women within the context of administrative reform, establishing cooperation mechanisms between governments and non-governmental organizations, and conducting research and gathering statistical data on the role of women in society. In addition, the conference had attached particular importance to cooperation between the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions. Accordingly, the participants had recommended that the Advisory Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should consider, at its 1997 session, the possibility of extending its activities to cover central and eastern Europe. An important result of the meeting had been the elaboration of a national action plan to implement the Platform for Action; countries in other regions could use the plan as a model.

40. Ms. TOMIC (Slovenia) welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) and the measures taken by most intergovernmental bodies, secretariats and programmes of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into their policies and programmes. However, further work was needed to incorporate a gender perspective in the day-to-day work of United Nations staff, for example by developing a methodology to apply a gender perspective in reporting under the terms of international human rights instruments and mechanisms. Her delegation viewed with interest the recommendations of the Expert Group of the Statistical Commission on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences, to the effect that sets of national social data disaggregated by sex should be prepared in order to measure progress in implementation of the programmes of action of the conferences. Her delegation also wished to stress the invaluable role of non-governmental organizations in monitoring the progress of implementation of conference recommendations.

41. With regard to the position of women in the United Nations Secretariat, her delegation believed it was important to continue to strive for achievement of the set targets for more equality between the sexes and for more equitable geographical distribution, despite the crisis facing the Organization. Her Government fully agreed with the relevant remarks in the report on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304).

42. Although there was de jure equality between men and women in Slovenia, much needed to be done in order to achieve de facto equality. To raise public awareness about such issues, the Government of Slovenia had published the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Slovene and had disseminated a

summary of the provisions of the Beijing document in schools, public institutions, and elsewhere.

43. As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Slovenia was aware of the problem posed by the backlog of reports awaiting review. It thus supported the decision taken by the States parties the previous year to amend article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention. However, since it was anticipated that the entry into force of that amendment would take some time, her Government supported the interim request by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for two three-week sessions preceded by a one-week pre-session working group. The Convention was the basic legal framework for the human rights of women, which had been reaffirmed as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the World Conference on Human Rights and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Her delegation was therefore pleased to note the growing number of States parties to the Convention and hoped that its universal ratification could be achieved by the year 2000. Slovenia supported moves for an optional protocol to the Convention which would provide the right to submit individual appeals in cases of violation of women's rights. Her Government thus supported the continuation of the work of the relevant working group during the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

44. Her delegation attached particular importance to the issue of violence against women in all its forms and endorsed the statement in the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/51/325) that the work of the expert group on that issue at its meeting in May could be considered as a starting point for work on internationally agreed indicators for violence against women.

45. Ms. LOPES DA ROSA (Guinea-Bissau) said that, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Governments and non-governmental organizations had acknowledged the relationship between social development and improving the economic and political status of women. One of the main concerns of the Conference had been to reverse the trend towards the feminization of poverty, thereby rescuing women from the vicious circle which was a flagrant violation of human rights and an affront to human dignity. However, it had to be admitted that the status of women had changed little, especially in Africa.

46. Her Government recognized that the principal agents in the fight against poverty were governments, but believed that the international community had a moral obligation to keep the promises which had been made at the Beijing Conference, particularly with regard to mobilizing new and additional resources and increasing international cooperation. In that regard, her Government, which in spite of budgetary constraints had always devoted special attention to the status of women, had taken innovative steps to incorporate the legitimate concerns of women into the country's development policies and programmes. Pursuant to the Beijing recommendations, her Government had organized seminars and courses in different areas to inform the public about the progress and the results of the conference. In addition, it had established an Executive Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women to follow up on the conference. The Government of Guinea-Bissau was conscious of the need to encourage the role of women as both agents and beneficiaries of

development by ensuring that they had better access to education, health, employment, maternity and child-care services, as well as access to credit so that they could be fully integrated in the country's development. Consequently, the Government intended to implement a plan of action with the active collaboration and participation of all interested parties.

47. Her delegation welcomed the appointment of an Assistant Secretary-General and a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues, and also the establishment of a Steering Committee to improve the status of women in the Secretariat, all of which reaffirmed the Secretary-General's desire to encourage the advancement of women. Her delegation also welcomed the measures taken by various bodies, secretariats and programmes throughout the United Nations system to fulfil the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action. While acknowledging the valuable work done by bodies dedicated to the advancement of women such as the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and UNIFEM, she believed it was important to provide them with political and financial support to enable them to carry out their mandates.

48. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - which Guinea-Bissau had been among the first to sign and ratify - was still one of the most important legal instruments in the fight against discrimination. Her delegation therefore endorsed the decision by the Economic and Social Council to renew the mandate of the working group responsible for elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention. At meetings of the States parties to the Convention, her Government had supported the proposal to request the General Assembly to authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to meet twice a year with effect from 1997 in order to deal with the consideration backlog of reports. Her Government also endorsed the Committee's decision to request State parties to include in their reports information on the measures they had adopted to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

49. Guinea-Bissau regretted that exploitation of women through international prostitution networks and trafficking in women and girls had become one of the major forms of international organized crime. Appropriate and urgent measures must be taken to punish offenders and prevent that phenomenon, which constituted a violation of women's rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, countries must adopt new legislation and enforce existing laws, provide information and education, and allow for the rehabilitation and reintegration of those women into society. Furthermore, since international cooperation would have to be strengthened, as the Secretary-General had stated in his report (A/51/309), the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others of 1949, to which fewer than half of the Member States were party, should be revised and a new body established with responsibility for examining reports on the implementation of that Convention, in order to make it more effective.

50. As for the status of women in the Secretariat, efforts must be continued to increase women's representation at all levels, including in the highest grades.

51. Everything possible must be done to achieve the goals set in Beijing, and the United Nations system must play a leading role in establishing a climate favourable to increased cooperation and participation by countries so that obstacles to the advancement of women could be overcome. The necessary financial and human resources must be allocated and priority must be given to activities in that field; steps should also be taken to limit the impact of the Organization's financial crisis on programmes for the advancement of women.

52. Mr. TESSEMA (Ethiopia) said that his delegation believed that the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) provided guidelines for measures to be taken by the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stipulated that Governments had primary responsibility for the implementation of the commitments made at the Conference, and must take a leading role in coordinating, monitoring and assessing progress in the advancement of women. Since the demise of the military dictatorship five years earlier, the Ethiopian Government had taken measures to pave the way for the advancement of women. For example, the new Constitution guaranteed women equal rights; it had established a Women's Affairs Office, promulgated a national policy on women and incorporated gender issues into national education, health and population policies. Thus, the Fourth World Conference on Women had been a catalyst to national efforts for the advancement of women, and had also provided an opportunity to examine further the problems of Ethiopian women, share experiences and forge links of cooperation with the international community. With the goal of implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Government was devising a national plan of action as part of its development strategy under the guidance of the Women's Affairs Office.

53. A year after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the spirit of Beijing had encouraged the Ethiopian Government to enhance its activities for the advancement of women. In the political sphere, the election of a new Government had provided women with an opportunity to elect representatives who would promote their empowerment in the economic and political fields, and to serve in high offices in the Government. While the political empowerment of women remained a challenge for the Government, an encouraging start had been made, indicating that attitudes towards women's leadership capabilities were changing. In the economic sphere, the new Government had adopted a five-year programme of development centred on agricultural development. The new Constitution guaranteed to women the right to own land and access to credit, as well as other services, on an equal basis with men.

54. Another prime objective of the five-year development programme was the provision of primary health care services and education, for which purpose health centres and schools were being built in rural areas. The goal was to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, increase the enrollment of girls at all educational levels and decrease the high dropout rate for girls.

55. In the light of the measures undertaken in Ethiopia in the political, economic and social spheres to meet the commitments made at the Beijing Conference, it could be concluded that the advancement of women was on the right

track. The responsibility of Governments for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action should not, however, be overemphasized, especially with regard to a least developed country like Ethiopia, since implementation depended on assistance from and cooperation with the international community. Financial, material and technical assistance complemented by a favourable international economic environment was imperative for the realization of the strategic objectives set out in Beijing.

56. Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus) said that the importance of the Fourth World Conference on Women lay in the fact that not only had it established a strategy and tactics for improving the status of women over the forthcoming decade, but it had also proposed a specific mechanism for monitoring the fulfilment of its objectives. It was essential, therefore, that national activities should be reinforced by coordinated measures at the system-wide level.

57. Regrettably, the far-reaching socio-economic changes taking place in Belarus had been accompanied by negative effects, including a decline in production, price increases, inflation, a drop in real income and a lower standard of living, all of which was compounded by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The number of women living in poverty had increased due, in part, to the rigid social stereotypes regarding sex roles and the limitations imposed on women's access to power. Despite the economic crisis, measures had been taken to improve living conditions for women and children, including some laws providing protection for mothers and children as well as single mothers and mothers of large families.

58. On the basis of the documents from the Beijing Conference, mechanisms had been established to develop, coordinate and execute policy to improve the status of women in all spheres, and an attempt was being made to adapt national legislation to corresponding international norms. In June 1996, the Belarus Council of Ministers had approved the National Plan of Action 1996-2000 to improve the status of women. Furthermore, in accordance with the law on subsidies to families with children, subsidies would be granted to women during pregnancy, childbirth and while caring for children up to age 3. Various benefits were also planned for mothers raising disabled children, along with other social protection measures.

59. Belarus, a country with an economy in transition, was not in a position to resolve the social problems it faced without assistance from the international community. In that respect, it was grateful for the assistance provided by international organizations, particularly the Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Minsk. As a result of its cooperation, the Centre for Gender Information and Policy had been established within the Ministry of Social Welfare, with responsibility for developing and implementing gender policy in the country. The Centre maintained close cooperation with UNICEF. With assistance from the regional office for Europe of the World Health Organization, work was being completed on a national programme for maternal and child health. Belarus was taking part in the execution of the WHO project on investment in women's health and the UNDP project on women in development.

60. His delegation believed that the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had made a major contribution to the implementation of decisions made in Beijing. The results of that session were proving extremely useful, and his delegation considered that the Commission should act as a coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the decisions made at the Beijing Conference. He also supported the holding of discussions between interested delegations and the group of experts during the Commission's sessions. Account should be taken of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the selection of experts, and greater advantage should be taken of the opportunities which the Commission now had to elaborate new ways and methods for the organization of its work. Also, the restructuring of the Commission should continue to take place within the limits of the approved budget.

61. His delegation welcomed the adoption by the Commission of the resolution on poverty, which recognized the need to continue efforts of cooperation and international support for national activities to implement the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition. The time had come for the United Nations specialized agencies to pay attention to the practical implementation of the provisions of the texts which had been adopted at various international forums concerning aid to countries with economies in transition.

62. Finally, his delegation believed that violence against women was one of the most serious problems of the present times and it supported the establishment of a database on violence against women that would collect not only published information but also documents of a restricted nature.

63. Ms. WAHBI (Sudan) said that her Government based all its policies on the principle of justice, and women's issues were no exception to the rule. Ignorance of moral values and disrespect for certain religious beliefs, cultures and civilizations added to the pressure brought to bear on countries to change their national character; it had also affected the situation of women and caused conflicts which sometimes resulted in women losing some of the rights which they had had for centuries in certain traditional societies. Her delegation therefore asked the international community to put a stop to that phenomenon, which could only lead to a weakening of society and of the situation of women in society.

64. Since employment legislation guaranteed women equal rights in all respects, Sudanese women held elected positions in the Legislative Assembly and other posts at various levels in Government, centres of higher education, ministries, the police and the army. They also contributed, as professionals and researchers, to economic development in industry and services. A law had recently been promulgated establishing family care centres. The economic independence of women was also guaranteed by the Constitution. Women had access to banking services and to credit for housing and other purposes. In 1996 a law had been promulgated protecting women's rights to land ownership. The right to education was not in question. Sixty per cent of university students were women.

65. Also, the aim of health care services was not only to protect the population against disease, but also to establish an inner balance to ensure mental and physical health. Religion and traditions helped to prevent evils

suffered by other societies. Efforts were being made to protect women against violence, a phenomenon which occurred only in exceptional circumstances in Sudanese society, since both society and the law rejected it totally.

66. As for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, her Government had established concrete goals to eliminate obstacles which could impede the advancement of women. However, much remained to be done before the commitments entered into could be considered to have been fulfilled. The lack of resources within the United Nations system had made it more difficult to implement the Platform. At the international level, despite the wish expressed by many States to implement the Platform for Action, economic difficulties and scarce resources had been the main obstacles in the way of the fulfilment of those commitments.

67. States should enter into commitments both individually and collectively under the auspices of the United Nations, to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the Platform for Action. Also, she reiterated the request which had been made to the Secretary-General to do everything in his power to obtain the resources needed so that countries could put the Platform for Action into practice. Many voluntary mechanisms had been established in the Sudan to realize activities to promote the advancement of women. At the Government level, units had been created to promote the role of women and protect their right to work.

68. Pursuant to the Beijing Platform, her Government had focused on the priorities relating to eradication of poverty among women, the provision of special care to refugee women, girl children and the sharing of responsibilities in the home. A committee had been established, made up of university professors, deputies and representatives of non-governmental organizations, projects dealing with the priorities established in the Platform for Action had been drawn up and activities relating to women in development were being coordinated. On that last subject, practical training courses had been organized. Priority had been given to women in the media in order to promote knowledge about women and their role in society. Emphasis had been placed on the particular situation of working women, a condition accepted by religion and respected by Sudanese society.

69. Her Government intended to implement the Platform for Action in such a way as to enable women to enjoy all their rights and to make it possible to fulfil completely the commitments entered into regarding the advancement of women and the promotion of their role in society.

70. Ms. PRADA de MESA (International Labour Organisation) said that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had identified women's employment as central to the achievement of equality of opportunity and treatment and to the eradication of poverty. Accordingly, the advancement of women was among the highest priority areas for the technical cooperation and research activities and policy advisory services of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

71. Since the 1980s, women had been providing the bulk of all new labour supply, even in male-dominated occupations. That expansion, however, was due to

gender segregation within the labour market and the fact that women accepted non-standard forms of work, low-paid and low-skilled jobs or part-time employment. While more women were working, the great majority of them were simply swelling the ranks of the working poor, a situation exacerbated by the increasing number of female-headed households.

72. After giving statistical data on the subject, she mentioned some of the forms of discrimination that women faced when accessing the job market, including unequal access to training and retraining and to credit and other productive resources, and low participation in economic decision-making and in collective bargaining structures.

73. The new international programme of technical cooperation "More and Better Jobs for Women", the aim of which was to promote employment in conditions of equality, constituted the specific response of the ILO to the call of Beijing to the United Nations agencies. In preparing for that programme, ILO had issued a publication with the same title, analyzing current employment opportunities for women and the challenges facing them. The programme had been prepared in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

74. The programme would address, in a multidisciplinary way, the various social and economic factors that put women entering the labour force in a disadvantaged position and would emphasize a participatory approach to the formulation and implementation of all activities. In order to provide more jobs for women, the programme would take into account the many components involved in promoting equal opportunities for access to the labour market, including the creation of productive and remunerative employment opportunities that were equally accessible to women and men, the promotion of education and training for women and girls so as to enhance their recruitment, career and employment prospects, the development of entrepreneurship and improved access to productive resources so that women could become self-employed or set up their own business. Emphasis would also be placed on the enactment of legislation to promote gender equality in access to jobs.

75. In addition, ILO would draw upon its labour standards and activities to address the qualitative aspect of the problem, namely, equal pay for work of equal value; improved occupational safety and health measures; family-friendly workplaces; better employment security and working conditions for those in part-time or atypical forms of employment; social security provisions, including maternity protection; social protection for vulnerable or marginalized groups of women workers; and an end to job segregation. The mix of those components would differ from country to country and, at the invitation of the countries, ILO would strive to ensure that each national programme was tailored to country- or group-specific priorities, circumstances and needs so that the staff and experts of ILO could work closely with Government officials, employers' and workers' organizations and other representatives of civil society to define and prioritize objectives, secure financial and human resources, and plan and implement activities.

76. In short, only by working together could countries and agencies succeed in changing the course of gender equality and the role of women in the economy and in society.

77. Mr. GURMAN (United Nations Development Programme) said that, while the balance sheet for the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the period after the Fourth World Conference on Women was positive, much more remained to be done. The recent decisions taken by the senior management of UNDP would significantly increase the commitment of the Programme to the advancement of women and to gender equality. Through the Resident Coordinator system, UNDP was facilitating a joint response by the United Nations system to plans of action for the follow-up to the Beijing Conference, as evidenced by the recently concluded first meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

78. UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) were formulating strategies to improve the coordination of the response by the United Nations system at the national level to the follow-up to the Beijing Conference. UNDP had targeted ten countries to facilitate national consensus-building on policies, programmes and coordination. The new country strategy notes, UNDP advisory notes and national human development reports increasingly addressed gender gaps and supported gender-disaggregated human development indicators on capabilities and access to resources and opportunities. In addition, proposed programming interventions addressed the advancement of women and gender equality as issues that were linked strategically to poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods, regeneration of the environment and good governance.

79. In Tanzania, UNDP had a model policy in place which incorporated a gender perspective into all programme formulation, implementation and evaluation processes. In Guatemala, it was facilitating a national action platform for the advancement of women and gender equity within the framework of the Peace Agreements and poverty eradication programmes. In Europe and in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Programme was focusing on strengthening capacities for gender mainstreaming and on the dialogue between non-governmental organizations and Governments within the context of economic and political transition. In Asia, UNDP, with the support of the Government of Japan, was facilitating the exchange of technical cooperation among developing countries in the field of economic empowerment of women. There still remained, however, a substantial gap between the goals achieved and the objectives set. Moreover, financial allocations were insufficient to substantively support a gender-focused sustainable human development framework at the global, regional and national levels.

80. UNDP had taken a number of measures to address that gap. Its senior management had made a commitment to significantly increase financial resource allocations for the advancement of women through the global programme and the respective regional programmes. That would take place both through gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme and through programmes targeted to women. The respective regional programmes and the global programme would strengthen the capacities of programme countries to implement methodologies and tools for gender mainstreaming and would provide support for the development of models and

good practices. At the country level, a high level of commitment by Resident Representatives was essential to the achievement of that objective. The Administrator of UNDP was challenging the Resident Representatives to increase, in consultation with Governments, UNDP resource allocations for the advancement of women and to ensure that gender dimensions were addressed in all programmes. The Directors of Regional Bureaux had been requested to consider gender mainstreaming, gender equality and the advancement of women as a quality indicator for programme country access to additional resources.

81. In order to increase capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, the Gender in Development Programme had developed innovative training and learning workshops at the regional and subregional levels. In the approximately 20 countries of experimentation, the Gender in Development Programme would conclude an assessment of the best practices and the lessons learnt in the field of gender mainstreaming in order to provide guidance for policy and programme development over the following three years.

82. The goal of gender equality, from a programme and institutional perspective, was the collective responsibility of all of UNDP, led by senior management and guided, monitored and assessed by the Gender in Development Programme. Promoting the implementation of the targets set in the gender balance policy of UNDP was an integral part of the human resources strategy and change management process of UNDP.

83. Some progress had been made during the previous two years in the pursuit of gender balance, particularly at senior management levels. The number of women Resident Representatives had increased during that period from 16 to 21 and the number of Deputy Resident Representatives from 27 to 32. In summary, while more needed to be done to ensure that the actions of UNDP on behalf of women were consistent with its advocacy messages, the Programme was clearly on the right track in mainstreaming the gender perspective into the framework of sustainable human development.

84. Mr. AL-HITTI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, in its comments on the topic under consideration, Kuwait had referred to the suffering of Kuwaiti women because of the alleged detention of Kuwaiti men by Iraq. That situation had nothing to do with the subject under discussion. Iraq, moreover, had no prisoners of war of any nationality. While some persons had indeed disappeared, Iraq, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the Government of Kuwait itself, had attempted to locate them.

85. Iraq was of the view that Kuwait would provide a worthy service to the women of that country if it called upon its Government to eliminate discrimination against Kuwaiti women, who were not even allowed to vote in parliamentary and other types of elections. Instead of making accusations against Iraq to tarnish its image and prolong the unjust blockade, Kuwait should eliminate the discrimination against women that was perpetuated in the Constitution of that State.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.